

One medicine?

THE VETERINARY RECORD is published by the British Veterinary Association. It was founded in 1888 by William Hunting, FRCVS.

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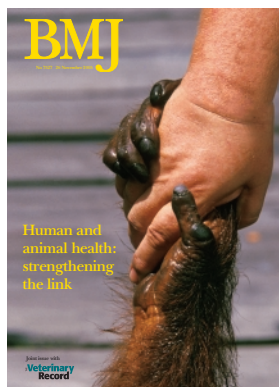
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Annual subscription:
United Kingdom: individuals £155.00; institutions £179.00; single copy £4.50.
Overseas: individuals £208.00; institutions £240.00.
Africa: individuals £173.00; institutions £200.00.
Subscription requests to McMillan-Scott Subscriber Services, Garrard House, 2-6 Homesdale Road, Bromley BR2 9WL. Telephone 020 8249 4444 Fax 020 8289 7955 e-mail: mcms@publishing-power.co.uk

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ISSN 0042 - 4900



This week's *Veterinary Record* and *BMJ* complement each other and explore the links between human and animal health

IN April, *The Veterinary Record* and the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) announced that they would be publishing simultaneous issues exploring how the veterinary and medical professions could collaborate for mutual benefit, and invited contributions and ideas for articles (*VR*, April 16, 2005, vol 156, p 493; *BMJ*, April 16, 2005, vol 330, pp 858-859). This issue of *The Veterinary Record*, and this week's *BMJ* (November 26, 2005, vol 331), which complement each other, represent the outcome of that announcement. Both issues contain numerous items on the theme of animal and human health, and, from November 26, both will be available online to doctors, vets and everyone else with an interest in this area. Links for the joint issue have been established between the two journals' websites, and access to all of this week's articles – in both *The Veterinary Record* and the *BMJ* – will be free of charge.

The Veterinary Record is online at www.bvapublications.com, and the *BMJ* at www.bmj.com

The medical and veterinary professions have different roles, but they have a common interest in many diseases and share many challenges. Diseases such as BSE, SARS and, most recently, H5N1 avian influenza, have highlighted the need for interprofessional collaboration not just locally and nationally, but on a global scale. When the joint issue was announced in April, H5N1 avian influenza in south-east Asia was already of concern. Since then, the confirmation of H5N1 virus in poultry in Turkey and Romania, and also in imported captive wild birds in a quarantine facility in the UK, has focused attention even more sharply. H5N1 virus presents unique challenges to those working in animal and human health; in view of this, a joint article on integrated working by the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Chief Medical Officer on pp 680-681 of this issue seems particularly pertinent. This article also appears in the *BMJ*.

In *The Veterinary Record*, an article by Professor Paul Gibbs, based on his Wooldridge Memorial Lecture at this year's BVA Congress, highlights the threat from emerging diseases, and the lessons being learned internationally. Other articles discuss steps being taken to improve surveillance, and to identify and assess the risks of new diseases as they emerge. An article on food safety discusses veterinary involvement in protecting the food chain. Not all of the articles are concerned with the threat of disease, and this issue also includes a review of therapeutic applications of the human companion animal bond. Other articles compare approaches to professional training and clinical audit.

Articles in the *BMJ* also consider emerging and foodborne zoonoses, along with other topics of mutual concern such as antibiotic resistance and bioterrorism. A paper on the psychosocial effects of the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease epidemic will be of interest to veterinarians, as will a paper on trypanosomiasis and an article comparing the efforts being made to rid the world of polio and rinderpest. Comparative medicine features in the issue, with a review on gastroenterology and an editorial asking what Dr Finlay and Mr Herriot could learn from each other. Further articles discuss both positive and negative aspects of pet ownership. There is a report of a trial suggesting that animal-facilitated therapy with dolphins can help in the treatment of depression, as well as a review on the management of snake bites. Interviews with a medical and a veterinary ethicist compare ethical dilemmas facing the two professions.

The response to the idea of a joint issue was very positive. Inevitably, it has not been possible to take up all the suggestions, but we hope that, between them, the two issues give a sense of how doctors and vets are working together, and perhaps highlight areas where more could be achieved. One of the aims has been to stimulate debate. We would welcome feedback on the two issues and, as part of this process, the *BMJ* will be hosting a one-hour web chat for readers of both journals at 16.00 GMT on Thursday, December 1. Details of how to participate are available at <http://quest.bmj.com/chat>

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Veterinary Record 2005 157: 669
doi: 10.1136/vr.157.22.669

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